

# S.U.D.F. Calls for National Standards on 'Ambient Care' as AI-Integrated Behavioral Health Becomes a Policy Priority

*The Substance Use Disorder Foundation (SUDF) is urging state and federal stakeholders to accelerate the development of national standards for Ambient Care.*

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, February 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Substance Use Disorder Foundation ([SUDF](#)) is urging state and federal stakeholders to accelerate the development of national standards for Ambient Care, warning that the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence in behavioral health is outpacing the regulatory frameworks needed to protect patients, providers, and public funding systems.

Ambient Care—an emerging healthcare model in which AI-enabled systems continuously monitor engagement patterns, behavioral signals, and participation trends—has gained attention as a potential solution to rising behavioral health demand, clinician shortages, and persistent relapse rates. SUDF officials argue that this approach may represent one of the most significant structural shifts in outpatient addiction recovery and mental health treatment in decades, particularly for IOPs, PHP programs, MAT clinics, outpatient counseling groups, and Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs).

“America is facing a behavioral health crisis that cannot be solved with clinic hours alone,” said Dan Francis, CEO of the Orbiit [Recovery Ecosystem](#). “We’ve built systems that treat recovery like a weekly appointment, but addiction doesn’t operate on a schedule. Relapse happens in the gaps—between visits, between meetings, between moments of support. Ambient care closes those gaps.”



Bert Carroll, CTO, Orbiit Services Inc.

SUDF emphasized that the nation's addiction recovery infrastructure remains fragmented and reactive, relying heavily on episodic intervention models that often detect relapse only after it has already occurred. With overdose rates and mental health instability continuing to strain emergency systems, SUDF says policymakers must begin treating AI-integrated behavioral health as a form of public health infrastructure—not consumer wellness technology.

“AI in behavioral health is not optional anymore,” Francis added. “The question is whether it will be deployed responsibly under clear standards, or whether we’ll allow an unregulated wave of behavioral health surveillance tools to define the next decade.”



The Substance Use Disorder Foundation

The Foundation pointed to the Orbiit Recovery Ecosystem as a leading example of how Ambient Care can be deployed within structured outpatient environments while preserving clinical oversight and ethical safeguards. Orbiit combines micro-course learning, real-time engagement tracking, predictive behavioral pattern detection, and rapid outreach workflows supported by peer specialists and care teams.

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*Bert Carroll, Chief Technology Officer, Orbiit Services Inc.*

“Providers are being asked to produce better outcomes with fewer resources, and the math simply doesn’t work without technology,” said Bert Carroll, CTO of the Orbiit Recovery Ecosystem. “Ambient care is not a luxury—it’s the missing infrastructure layer. It gives treatment teams visibility into disengagement trends early enough to

intervene before patients vanish from care.”

SUDF officials argue that Ambient Care models could be particularly impactful for Medicaid populations, rural communities, and underserved regions where outpatient providers are stretched thin and transportation barriers reduce consistent attendance. The Foundation notes

that disengagement is one of the most reliable predictors of relapse, yet most outpatient systems have limited ability to detect it in real time.

“Clinicians can’t intervene in what they can’t see,” Carroll added. “If the first time a program realizes someone is at risk is when they miss three sessions, we’ve already failed them. Ambient AI makes early detection possible at scale.”

In its policy guidance, SUDF stressed that AI-integrated behavioral health must remain anchored to clinical responsibility and transparent intervention pathways. The Foundation warned against “black box” behavioral health algorithms that make predictions without accountability, and it called for standards addressing privacy protections, ethical boundaries, data security, and patient consent.



Daniel Francis, CEO Orbiit Services Inc

“This is where the country needs leadership,” Francis said. “We need to establish what ethical AI-integrated recovery looks like before it becomes widespread. If we wait until after harm occurs, the backlash will set innovation back by ten years.”

SUDF said it intends to act as a standards-setting organization for the emerging digital recovery sector, helping establish credentialing frameworks that outpatient providers and recovery organizations can trust. The Foundation’s model is designed to ensure that AI systems used in addiction recovery are auditable, clinically aligned, and structured to support—not replace—licensed professionals and peer-led recovery models.

The Foundation also emphasized that the adoption of Ambient Care could create measurable benefits for healthcare systems and state agencies, including reduced readmissions, improved retention in outpatient care, improved compliance reporting, and a stronger ability to track long-term recovery outcomes across programs.

“We’ve normalized a system where long-term success rates in addiction recovery are considered acceptable even when they are tragically low,” Francis said. “That would never be tolerated in cardiology, oncology, or trauma care. Recovery deserves the same standard of performance, and technology is the only scalable path to get there.”

SUDF is calling on IOP operators, PHP leadership teams, MAT providers, outpatient clinical directors, RCO executives, and state behavioral health agencies to begin evaluating Ambient Care models immediately and to participate in the formation of national standards that balance innovation with accountability.

“The future of behavioral health is going to be measured,” Carroll said. “The programs that win will be the ones that can prove engagement, prove retention, and prove outcomes. Ambient care is how you build that proof; the [DRS Program](#) ensures this accountability.”

#### About the Substance Use Disorder Foundation (SUDF)

The Substance Use Disorder Foundation is an emerging oversight and standards organization focused on establishing credentialing frameworks for digital recovery platforms, AI-integrated behavioral health systems, and recovery technology designed to support addiction recovery and mental health outcomes with ethical accountability, data protection, and clinical integrity.

#### About the Orbiit Recovery Ecosystem

The Orbiit Recovery Ecosystem is an AI-integrated behavioral health platform designed to support addiction recovery and outpatient mental health care through micro-course engagement, predictive risk detection, real-time intervention workflows, and human-in-the-loop peer and clinical support models.

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